



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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A change in the kind of bait used by fishermen of New England's hook and line fleet will save an estimated 30,000 pounds of food fish a week for the market during part of the year, the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries announced today.

The hook and line fleet is composed of small boats, which normally fish close to shore, out of Boston, Gloucester, and Portland. Largely manned by Italian and Portuguese fishermen, the fleet last year accounted for a production of some 13,250,000 (million) pounds of fish.

This winter, with bait difficult to obtain, the fishermen have been using No. 1 quality medium frozen mackerel or shucked sea-clams. Experts of the Coordinator's Office, worried by the use of food fish for bait, suggested the use of menhaden, a small shad-like fish of which millions of pounds are caught along the Atlantic Coast each year. The menhaden, although edible, is used almost exclusively for reduction into oil and fish meal.

Captains of the hook and liners were at first reluctant to try menhaden, saying that it could be used for hake and haddock in the spring, but that cod would not bite on it. The captains of two boats, the Lark and Gossoon, were persuaded to try menhaden on one trip. Both boats returned to the port with larger catches than similar boats landing the same day. The Lark caught 25,500 pounds of cod, amounting to one-half its total catch.

Arrangements are now being made by Boston bait dealers to insure a steady and satisfactory supply of frozen menhaden for the fleet. Already 31,000 pounds -- about as much as the fleet requires each week -- have been delivered in Boston from New Jersey.

The use of menhaden as bait is expected to save the fishermen a large part of the cost of bait. They had been paying ten cents a pound for mackerel and as much as 14 cents a pound for clams, and these high prices have kept numbers of the boats from fishing. It is expected that frozen menhaden from as far south as Virginia can be sold in Boston for about six cents a pound.